

## Prescription drugs, natural remedies, merge at Pharmaca

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By Dave Schwab (daves@lajollalight.com)

Today, everything from cars to bars to tomatoes are being hybridized. Now, you can add pharmacies to that mix. And one is coming to the Jewel.

Pharmaca Integrative Pharmacy, a unique concept combining prescription drug and over-the-counter products with natural, complementary and personal body care products, will open a new, 5,700-square foot store at 7650 Girard Ave. on Sept. 6.

It's part of a new West Coast expansion for the Pharmaca firm, whose first store was opened in Boulder, Colo. in November 2000 by Barry Perzow, a retailer with 40 years experience in Canada, the United States and Europe. Perzow was president of Capers Natural Food Markets, a single store concept in West Vancouver, which he expanded to three large-format supermarkets and two natural restaurants, becoming Canada's leading natural health retailer. In 1996, Capers merged with Alfalfas Markets of Colorado. In 1997, Wild Oats Community Markets acquired the company with Perzow responsible for managing the post-merger integration.

"It's a very holistic approach to preventative health," said Perzow, about what makes Pharmaca innovative and integrative, and sets it apart from other players in the pharmacy industry. "It combines traditional medicine, over-the-counter or prescription, and combines that with complementary medications."

Perzow said Pharmaca employs a "back to the future" approach to pharmaceutical care. "Every one of our stores is built in a carefully planned, compounding lab where the pharmacist actually customizes specific prescriptions for personalized use by our customers in a dialogue with their doctor, which is not done anywhere else," he said. "It's the way pharmacies used to operate 40, 50 years back."

Perzow's vision was to reinvent the neighborhood pharmacy by combining prescription and natural medicines under one roof with qualified practitioners who are able to address the full spectrum of health and wellness issues.

Each Pharmaca store has a staff of professional pharmacists, naturopaths, homeopaths, herbalists, nutritionists and estheticians. Perzow calls his model an "Integrative Pharmacy. Each store offers full-service prescription dispensing and accepts most insurance plans.

Immersed in a spa-like ambiance, Pharmaca offers one-stop shopping for prescription filling services, health and beauty products and unique gifts. A special section of each store is devoted to personal care and natural beauty, including an array of "safe" cosmetics and beauty products with natural and organic ingredients. High-end merchandise and exclusive spa lines also stock the shelves. There is also a beauty bar, complete with a sink, mirror and supplies for customer use.

Pharmaca offers private consultations on health or prescription matters with its licensed professional staff by appointment, or any time a practitioner is available. Each Pharmaca store contains a library section featuring health-oriented books and magazines, on-line access to the "IntegrativMedicine" program and a complimentary selection of herbal teas.

Pharmacists are available at Pharmaca stores to consult with clients about drug/herb interactions and drug/nutrient depletions, an oft-overlooked side effect of prescription drug usage. Chris Turf, the director of Pharmaca's integrative pharmacy, noted the firm's more holistic approach to pharmaceutical-, health- and beauty-care treatment is aimed at promoting wellness and preventing illness.

"The traditional model in Western medicine is sort of to wait until the car is broken, then try and get it fixed once you have an emergency," said Turf. "Vitamins or vital substance in your body are often depleted due to the prescription medicine you're taking.

Doctors should be telling their patients, 'When you take this prescription medication, you should be taking this vitamin, or this other product, to prevent depletion.' Our integrative pharmacy uses natural remedies and preventative-type remedies, like diet and nutritional supplements, to prevent catastrophe."

Turf added the one-size-fits-all model is not the best for pharmaceutical, health and beauty care. More optimal, he said, is customization. "Everyone has their own specific needs," he said. "The drugs each person is taking are evaluated by a physician and by our pharmacists with their specific needs in mind, then medications are custom-tailored for the individual."

The compounding system practiced at Pharmaca is quite literally, customization. At a Pharmaca store, for example, a customer can get a wheat-free prescription for their spouse, a tuna-flavored pain reliever for their cat or a fruit-flavored "lollipop" to make their

child's medication more palatable. Just about any type of medicine can be compounded, but the most popular types of prescriptions which can be compounded include bioidentical hormone replacement therapy, pain management, veterinary medications, pediatrics and dermatological compounds.

Above all else, education is prized at Pharmaca, noted company founder Perzow. "I felt there was an opportunity to take the holistic part of our business and capture all the other categories and provide far more education for the customer," he said. "We took the typical supermarket-based model and turned it on its head. We've packed our stores with professional practitioners and integrated that with pharmaceuticals. Once completed, you have everything under one roof: integrative medicine."

Call La Jolla Pharmaca at (858) 454-1337. For prescriptions call (858) 454-1633. For more information visit [www.pharmaca.com](http://www.pharmaca.com).



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